

## **AGENDA ITEM IV**

### **PROPOSED LETTER OF INTENT**

**LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY AND A&M COLLEGE  
UNIVERSITY OF NEW ORLEANS  
SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY-BATON ROUGE**

**COLLABORATIVE PH.D. IN MATERIALS SCIENCE AND  
ENGINEERING**

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#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

The 1994 *Desegregation Settlement Agreement* provided for the development and implementation of new programs at predominantly black institutions of higher education in Louisiana to “enhance each institution’s chances of attracting other race students” and, in the case of Southern University-Baton Rouge (SUBR), “to provide the program basis [needed] to achieve Four-Year 2 University classification.” One of several doctorate programs to be considered for SUBR was a Ph.D. in Materials Science.

Beginning in 1999, Louisiana State University and A&M College and SUBR discussed the idea of proposing a joint/collaborative/cooperative program in this area. Initial discussions reached an impasse in 2000 but were revived later in 2002 when the University of New Orleans was also included. A Letter of Intent for a projected Collaborative Ph.D. program in Materials Science and Engineering at LSU A&M, UNO and SUBR was approved by the LSU System in October 2003. The SU System followed suit with a similar action in November 2003. Subsequently, at its meeting in February 2004, the SU System requested that the Regents delay consideration of the proposal, pending further faculty review. In April 2004, the SU System decided to proceed with the Letter of Intent as it was approved previously.

When the final, approved Letter of Intent was received at the Board of Regents, the staff concluded that the requested action was significantly different from the Ph.D. in Materials Science program provided for SUBR by the *Agreement*. However, Section 14c of the *Agreement* stipulated a procedure for such cases where modifications were made. Following this procedure, the SU System sent a notification letter to all affected parties in October 2004 and requested comments and/or objections to be returned within 60 days. The period expired; there were no written comments or objections from affected parties.

#### **DEFINITION OF TERMS**

Because there is text in the documents submitted by LSU and SU Systems that indicates "joint" rather than "collaborative" ventures, the first question to be addressed is whether the proposal is truly "cooperative," "joint," or "collaborative" in nature.

## **Cooperative**

A "primary" institution awards the degree, so students matriculate and take required coursework there. One or more "secondary" institutions cooperate with the primary institution by offering a limited number of courses in the curriculum. Both primary and secondary institutions may offer elective and/or concentration coursework; it is possible for one or more institutions to be designated as "sole providers" of such.

## **Joint**

Two or more "participant" institutions together award a single ("joint") degree, so students matriculate at each participant institution. Each institution is designated as a "sole provider" of a particular set of required courses in the curriculum (usually distributed evenly). All participant institutions may offer elective and/or concentration coursework; it is usually the case that one or more participant institutions is designated as "sole provider" of such.

## **Collaborative**

Two or more "associated" institutions each separately award the same degree, as all associated institutions require the same set of "required courses." Students select a "home" institution, matriculate there, and take all required coursework there. The student may then go to associated institutions for electives and concentration coursework, since some of those associated institutions may have been designated as "sole providers" of such coursework.

Given these definitions, the proposed Letter of Intent does indeed most closely resemble a "Collaborative" program: each university would be able to award its own Ph.D. in Materials Science and Engineering degree.

## **STAFF ANALYSIS**

### **Appropriateness with the Role, Scope and Mission**

The proposed program is consistent with the role, scope and mission statements of all three institutions.

### **Potential for Unnecessary Program Duplication**

The proposed cooperative program is not in fact a single degree program; it is a curricular arrangement wherein three institutions work together, and each award a degree. In this particular case, and as currently envisioned, the three institutions will all offer the same degree, but each will have exclusive rights to offer one or more specific concentration areas. The decision that needs to

be made, therefore, is whether the separate concentration areas proposed are significantly different enough to justify creating three separate degree programs. That is a judgment that can only be made after a review of the full proposal for the program. There are two primary reasons which have led the staff to this conclusion:

1. The Letter of Intent does not provide a complete proposed curriculum; the curriculum is only broadly described in terms of educational philosophy and intent. Hence, without a final curriculum, the degree to which collaboration may or may occur is impossible to determine.
2. Consultants may recommend significant structural and/or curricular changes which could significantly alter the projected curricular/program arrangement. Indeed, they may suggest a completely different curriculum other than that envisioned, or even conclude that resources are insufficient to support the participation of one or more of the associate institutions.

### **Consistency with Desegregation Agreement**

The *Desegregation Settlement Agreement* provided for the development of a Ph.D. in Materials Science at SUBR only. SUBR has appropriately followed requirements of the *Agreement* to allow a program substitution, and there have been no objections by any of the affected parties.

### **Adherence to Specific Board of Regents Criteria for Funding**

According to both the LSU and SU System proposals:

*The programs will commence with existing courses and research resources...No new costs are required for implementation of the programs. Funds for the advancement of LaMaRC (Louisiana Materials Science Consortium) will be sought from the state of Louisiana and other funding sources.*

The staff observes that if additional state funding for LaMaRC is determined to be an essential component of the program, then new state monies will be required for program implementation and development.

While not specifically stated as a rationale for additional costs, the Letter of Intent makes extensive and often persuasive arguments of need, based on economic development considerations.

### **STAFF SUMMARY**

The staff concludes that the Letter of Intent for the projected cooperative Ph.D. in Materials Science and Engineering program at LSU A&M, UNO, and SUBR clearly meets two of the four requirements of **Academic Affairs Policy 2.4 - Letter of Intent for Projected New Academic Programs** (Appropriateness to Role, Scope, and Mission and Consistency with the Desegregation

Settlement Agreement) and likely meets a third requirement (Adherence to Specific Board of Regents Criteria for Funding). However, without in-depth review of the final curriculum and eventual program arrangements, it is not possible to make a judgment of the Potential for Unnecessary Program Duplication. It will be necessary to await the submittal of a final proposal and, thereafter, the results of a review by appropriate out-of-state consultants before this critical issue can be resolved.

#### ***STAFF RECOMMENDATION***

***The staff recommends that the Academic and Student Affairs Committee approve the Letter of Intent for a Collaborative Ph.D. program in Materials Science and Engineering (CIP Code 14.3101) at Louisiana State University and A&M College, the University of New Orleans, and Southern University-Baton Rouge. Any forthcoming program proposal submitted as result of this Letter of Intent shall specifically address possible unnecessary program duplication between and among these three institutions. Thereafter, the final program proposal shall be reviewed by a team of appropriate out-of-state consultants who will render their opinion regarding the aforementioned issue and, further, provide an in-depth analysis based on nationally-recognized indices of quality and need.***